

# The Washington Post Magazine

March 2, 1980

**SOME OF THE  
SLICKEST  
SOVIET AGENTS  
IN THE WORLD  
WORK HERE.**

**BUT THIS BUILDING  
ISN'T IN MOSCOW,  
IT'S FOUR BLOCKS  
FROM THE  
WHITE HOUSE.**

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## **THE KGB IN WASHINGTON**

**BY TAD SZULC**

**PLUS:  
OUTDOOR LIVING  
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# The KGB In Washington

There are about 200 Soviet agents here  
They read a lot, attend congressional hearings,  
have lunch with the right people and, of course,  
they recruit infiltrators

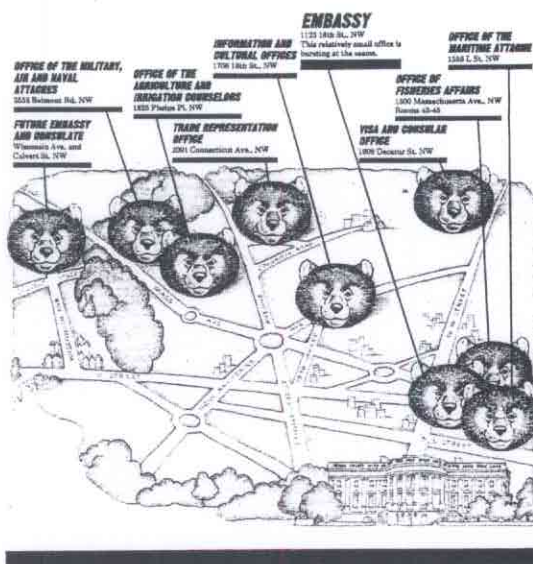
BY TAD SZULC

Some information in this article was produced from interviews with U.S. intelligence officials and from other federal security specialists who insisted on anonymity. The author also is acquainted with Soviet diplomats.

**B**oris V. Kondratsev, as we shall call him, though that is not his real name, leaves his fourth-floor apartment at 1500 Massachusetts Ave. NW, in Washington every weekday morning at precisely 7:45. A round-faced man, about 38 years old, he usually wears a dark gray suit and a conservative tie. He walks toward Scott Circle, then turns left on 16th Street to reach the Soviet Embassy, the old-fashioned building next to the University Club, a few minutes later. He can see the White House four blocks down 16th Street as, strolling past uniformed officers of the Executive Protective Service at the iron gate, he enters the embassy.

Every morning he is discreetly followed from home to office by two men in business suits who had been waiting for him across the street from the apartment building, the home of a number of Soviet Embassy officials and their families. The two men are agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Boris Kondratsev, who is

*Tad Szulc is a free-lance writer who specializes in national security affairs.*



officially listed as a second secretary of the Soviet Embassy, is an agent of the KGB, the Soviet secret service, its Russian initials standing for *Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti* (State Security Committee). Boris knows he is being tailed, and the FBI

agents know he knows. This is all part of the endless intelligence war being silently waged in Washington—and elsewhere in the United States—between the KGB and American counterintelligence services, a war with clearly defined rules.

This contest, American officials say, is now more intense than at any other time since World War II. The reason is that the Soviet Union is steadily expanding and streamlining its intelligence operations in the United States—from sophisticated espionage to efforts aimed at establishing long-term hidden political influence assets in this country—in a fashion highly worrisome to the American government.

Soviet intelligence, of course, has always been extremely active in the United States (just as American intelligence, working against much greater odds, has striven to penetrate the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies), but the conviction among Washington's security specialists is that the Russians made a major policy decision, probably in the early 1970s, to reorganize, step up and improve these activities. The same is true in Western Europe, where the traditionally well-entrenched KGB has scored significant intelligence successes in recent years.

All signs are that Moscow is reaching for intelligence superiority over the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization alliance as forcefully as it seeks to achieve military superiority, nuclear and conventional. These moves, Washington experts say, are closely linked.

In light of the dramatic deterioration in Soviet-American relations this year over the Afghanistan invasion and other tense foreign situations, the importance of the Soviet intelligence apparatus already in place in the United States is greater than ever. If the hostility between the two governments continues to escalate, the Russians will have the extraordinary advantage of being able to acquire, overtly and covertly, invaluable information about the United States at a time of profound crisis. American officials say, for instance, that the Soviet intelligence capabilities here have increased ten-fold since the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, reflecting long-range planning by the KGB. The administration, therefore, is particularly sensitive now to Soviet intelligence activities, although no massive increment is anticipated. For one thing, the government is increasingly cautious about admitting Soviet officials and visitors to this country: the détente-induced flow of exchange scientists, students and artists is being limited.

**N**obody knows exactly how many KGB agents, visible and non-visible, are currently operating in America, but both the FBI and the CIA's counterintelligence staffs believe the number runs

into many hundreds—and keeps growing. They also see the Soviet Embassy on 16th Street as the principal center of Soviet intelligence operations (some deep illegal espionage networks are controlled directly from Moscow), with diplomatic cover—and immunity—being provided by the embassy to scores of KGB agents.

Boris Kondratsev, who is a composite figure of diplomatic-cover KGB officers in Washington—based on descriptions and information provided by American counterintelligence officials—is one of the 143 Soviet Embassy officials listed in 1979 in the State Department's "Blue Book," from Ambassador Anatoly F. Dobrynin down. Each official is here with a spouse, raising the total with diplomatic immunity to 286. Additionally, there are 101 Soviet "employees" in Washington without diplomatic protection, and 24 more attached to the trade representation office in the capital. Unexplainedly, the "employees" are without spouses. The total number of Soviet citizens assigned to the embassy in Washington is thus 411.

The FBI and the CIA will not reveal how many of the 411 are identified as KGB officers. To do so, they point out, would compromise their counterintelligence work, telling the Russians how much is known of their activities. And a cardinal tenet of counterintelligence work is to keep the other fellow guessing about one's own knowledge. For that reason, both the FBI and the CIA have refused to discuss the subject during the preparation of this article, or to say which and how many officials of the Soviet Embassy fall in Boris Kondratsev's category, those certain to be working full-time for the KGB.

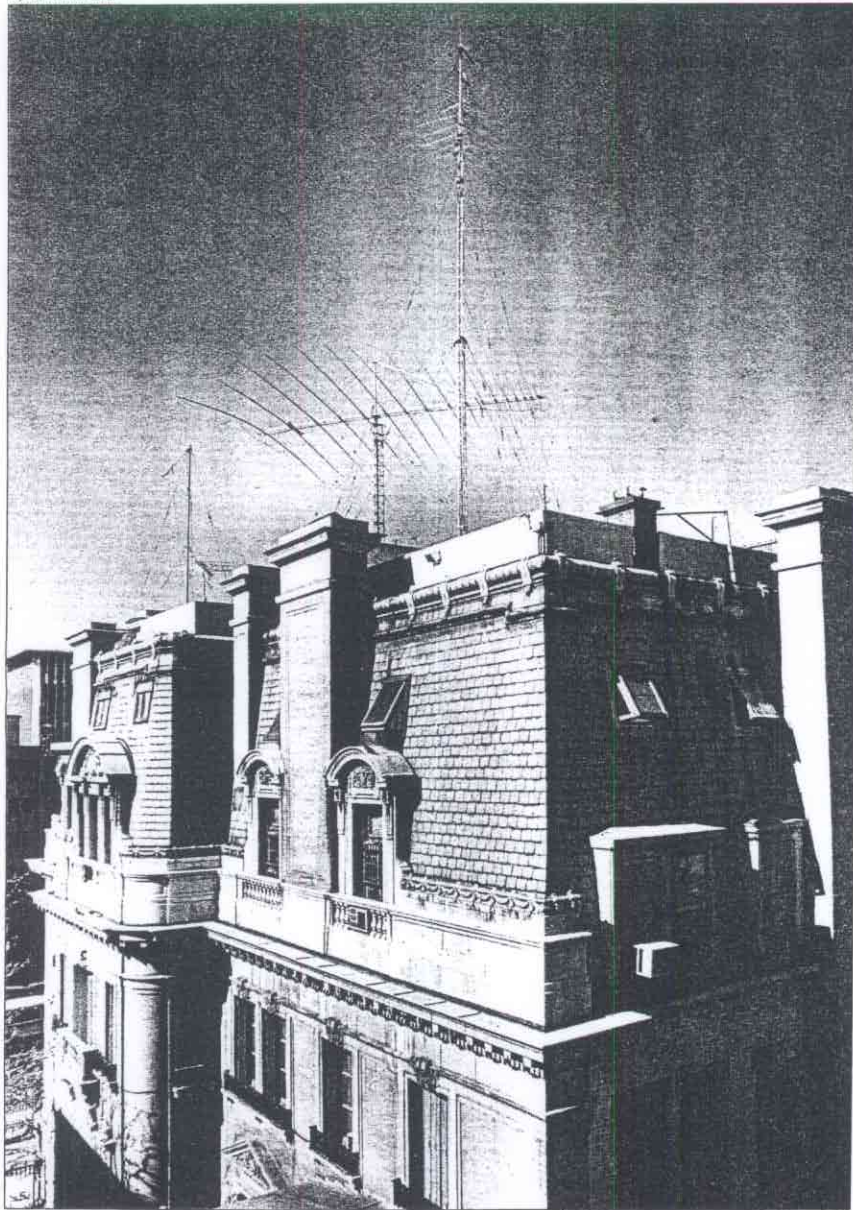
However, these agencies do not dispute the estimate made some years ago by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence that between 40 and 60 percent of Soviet Embassy officials belong to the KGB. It is also taken for granted that practically every Soviet diplomat is under a form of KGB discipline, reporting to it and carrying out special tasks as required. The working assumption is that the embassy—and the Soviet consulates in New York and San Francisco—are inseparable from the KGB in the broad sense of intelligence work.

In its annual report for the fiscal year 1978, the FBI said that between October 1972, and September 1978, the number of Soviet officials stationed in the United States rose from 901 to 1,125, including those employed at the United Nations Secretariat in New York, which is another major Soviet intelligence center in the country. The bureau commented drily that "past experience has conclusively revealed Soviet propensity

to intermingle diplomatic and intelligence assignments" and that "the larger number of tourists, students, commercial and cultural delegates, and others from Communist-bloc

countries entering the United States each year, provide a potentially valuable manpower pool for foreign intelligence-gathering operations."

Continued on next page



Radio antennas atop the Soviet embassy at 1115 16th Street NW beam KGB messages to Moscow.

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**B**oris Kondratsev is a prime example of this Soviet "propensity" to commingle diplomatic and intelligence assignments. And the way he operates in Washington provides an insight into the methodology of Soviet intelligence, emphasizing the importance of gathering information both through overt and covert means. In the modern practice of intelligence, the cloak-and-dagger approach is no longer predominant, especially in open societies such as the United States.

Boris is a political-military specialist for the KGB at the embassy in Washington, and his interests lie as much in the decision-making process in defense matters in the United States as in actual military secrets, although he is avid to obtain as many of those as possible.

He has a major's rank in the KGB's First Chief Directorate, which is in charge of all external operations, but his specific assignment is to the First Department of the First Chief Directorate, the office responsible for operations in the United States and Canada.

The First Chief Directorate also runs counterintelligence and the "Il-legals Directorate," the non-visible, deep-cover networks. For operational security reasons, Boris has no connections with the illegal networks, compartmentalization being a basic principle of intelligence for the KGB and the CIA. Individual officers know only what they need to know.

Boris feels very much at home in Washington, having lived here two years, and having earlier served a three-year stint at the United Nations. He joined the KGB after being graduated from Moscow University. He spent two years at the KGB school, then three years at the U.S.A. Institute of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, the center of American studies in the Soviet Union. At the institute, which coordinates and interprets overtly acquired information on the United States for the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party as well as for the Foreign Ministry and the KGB, Boris became a specialist on American affairs and became fluent in English. Today his English is colloquial to the point that his Washington acquaintances believe he went to school in the United States. He watches American television faithfully, goes to the movies with his wife Irina (employed at the trade representation office, and probably herself a KGB officer), and even keeps up with the fortunes of the Redskins.

Typically, Boris starts his day going through daily newspapers, a major source of information for KGB operatives. He works his way through

The Washington Post, The Washington Star, The New York Times, The Baltimore Sun and The Wall Street Journal, looking for defense-related articles. All these newspapers have excellent writers on military affairs, and Boris keeps abreast of SALT II issues, discussions on the increase in defense spending this year in light of the Afghanistan-triggered crisis, the plans for deploying the MX missile and steps being taken to put together a rapid deployment force for emergency action around the world. This is vital strategic information for the Soviets, and the trick is to know how to find nuggets of new data in newspaper stories and relate them to other facts obtained through covert means.

The Wall Street Journal, for example, informs Boris almost daily which defense contractor has been awarded which contract and for how much by the Army, Navy and Air Force. Then Boris turns to specialized publications. Aviation Week is one of his favorites. It is probably the most helpful publication on military affairs and, usually, well ahead of all others in reporting developments in aviation, missiles and space. It is probably the best source on, for instance, the Pentagon's program for building satellites designed to neutralize Soviet satellite-killers.

Trade publications are also valuable for Boris, notably those reporting on electronics and avionics. In them he learns of advances in such hardware as electronic countermeasures used by U.S. warplanes against Soviet ground or air radar. And so it goes, the patient assembly of information from overt sources. In Moscow, Soviet specialists will extrapolate even more data from the materials sent by Boris.

Attending open congressional committee hearings on defense questions takes up a great deal of Boris's time but is worth every minute of it. Given Boris's experience, attentive listening to questions by congressmen and senators and to answers by Pentagon or State Department officials can give him an excellent sense of the detailed thinking on defense. Boris, of course, is not alone in attending congressional hearings. His embassy and/or KGB colleagues can be spotted even at the most obscure subcommittee hearings on foreign policy, the economy, and just about every relevant aspect of American life and policy-making. The Soviet Embassy buys in massive quantity prints of congressional hearings and reports from the Government Printing Office. An American publishing distributor in New England does a land-office business exporting printed congressional materials and other U.S. government publications, tons of them annually, to government clients in the Soviet

Union and in Eastern Europe. The Russians and others apparently assume that by using an American distributor, they will not miss anything of remote importance. And besides, it is less obvious.

Boris and his KGB colleagues also have an active social life, though it is not always clear how fruitful this is professionally. Two or three times a week, he invites an American acquaintance—a journalist who is thought to be well informed, an academician specializing in foreign affairs and defense, or even a government official—to an expensive Washington restaurant for a brain-picking session.

**A** KGB agent is not looking for official secrets at these luncheons. He wants opinions, assessments and evaluations of American policies. In other words, he is after *political intelligence* and, he hopes, "insider" views that are then relayed to KGB headquarters in Moscow. Those accepting Soviet invitations, and many do, usually have nothing shatteringly perceptive to say. Journalists' "insights" can be read in their newspapers, but the Russians appear to believe in the "horse's mouth" myth. Besides, the information flow works both ways—the agent's questioning may reveal what interests Moscow most at the moment. Soviets also sometimes drop hints about their policy views—deliberately—and that official line, even if propaganda, may be worth knowing.

This intelligence method raises the question of why the Russians often use KGB officers, rather than regular diplomats, to perform what essentially are normal embassy functions.

Sovietologists in Washington believe the answer is to be found in the special relationship between the KGB and the ruling Politburo. The KGB is more than an intelligence service or a police: It is a significant political power within the Soviet establishment. KGB chairman Yuri V. Andropov, a 65-year-old Communist Party leader with impressive intellectual and professional credentials, carries vastly more weight in the Politburo than foreign minister Andrei A. Gromyko. Inasmuch as Andropov and the KGB play a key role in the formulation of Soviet policies, including foreign and defense affairs, they wish to have their own political intelligence channels and sources, American experts say.

The KGB has gone to the extreme of openly establishing direct links with the White House on at least two occasions. In 1961, Soviet press attaché Georgi Bolshakov, regarded by the CIA as a top KGB agent, established a close social relationship with

Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, and secret communications between President Kennedy and Premier Nikita Khrushchev were exchanged through this channel during the Berlin and Cuban crises.

In 1968, Boris Sedov, another well-known KGB operative, maintained contacts with Henry Kissinger between the election and inauguration of President Nixon. In December that year, after Nixon had invited him to serve as national security adviser, Kissinger was visited by Boris Sedov whom he describes in his book as "a KGB operative who seemed to have had the Rockefeller assignment during the campaign and who had tagged along with me ever since." Sedov wanted to know whether Nixon would be prepared to meet soon with Brezhnev, and Kissinger told him that the president-elect would not. Then Sedov kept insisting to Kissinger that Nixon should include in his inaugural address something "to the effect that he was keeping open the lines of communication to Moscow." Kissinger, who wrote that he saw "no harm in it," agreed, and Nixon made such a statement.

As for the current situation, if the Carter administration has its KGB contact, it is not saying so.

**T**he KGB evidently enjoys an immense advantage over the CIA. In Moscow, CIA officers have to obtain their information the hard way—the Russians do not give away publicly political, economic or defense data, or come to cozy lunches. But in the United States agents like Boris Kondratsev can operate in the context of an open society: Besides access to key personalities in Washington, access to crucial information is provided by the American press and the Congress. For example, the CIA is convinced that quite a few Freedom of Information Act requests flooding the agency come from KGB agents here and abroad. The CIA is worried not only that important information will thus be channeled to the Russians, but, even more so, that agents abroad will refuse to collaborate out of fear that, inadvertently, their identities might emerge in the process. The Information Act material may include the name of a foreign official linked to the U.S. intelligence apparatus. This is not known to have happened so far, but high-level agents abroad obviously worry about it.

"It is also possible," deputy CIA director Frank C. Carlucci testified last April before a Senate subcommittee, "that a sophisticated foreign intelligence service could piece together, from the bits and pieces of released information, a larger portion of the



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entire picture regarding a particular intelligence activity or operation."

As a reflection of the changing times, an amendment was introduced in the Senate last month to the Freedom of Information Act exempting the CIA from fulfilling any informational requests except for an applicant's own personal file at the CIA, if any.

**T**he gathering of general intelligence, however, is not confined to the embassy and the KGB. They are assisted by the 31 Soviet press, radio and television correspondents stationed in Washington and New York. Soviet correspondents, as with all foreign correspondents in the United States, are accredited to the White House and the State Department and thus may attend daily news conferences and briefings. As journalists, they have considerable freedom of movement, and they easily socialize with their American colleagues. The FBI and the CIA consider the reporters for the news agency TASS, the newspapers Pravda and Izvestia and other publications to be part of the overall Soviet intelligence apparatus in this country. They will not say, however, whether any newsmen are thought to be actual KGB agents.

In any event, Soviet newspaper readers see relatively little of what is sent to Moscow from the United States every day by these correspondents. Except for special articles, usually ideologically oriented in their discussions of American life, coverage of the United States in the Soviet media is limited. The bulk of the dispatches emanating from Soviet newsmen in Washington and New York appears in special restricted daily bulletins for high government and Communist Party officials. The bulletins are printed on paper in different colors, according to the importance of their readership. The green bulletins are the most complete and go to the highest officials.

All the Soviet intelligence activities described so far are perfectly legal, although the FBI is increasingly alarmed by the intensity and scope of this research effort. It knows that men like Boris Kondratsev are highly trained and experienced observers in the areas of their specialty, and that the flow of unclassified information about the United States to the Soviet Union may be reaching a point that threatens national security. As an American intelligence officer remarked in a recent interview, "It's incredible how much significant material just lies around Washington, waiting for somebody to pick up the pieces, and the Russians are doing precisely that . . . All that KGB

analysts back in Moscow have to do is to put together what is being publicly said and written in the United States, and they have an excellent intelligence overview of America." But, as senior administration officials acknowledge, that is a price the United States pays for maintaining an open society—and nobody has suggested that the price is too high.

**T**he KGB is obviously not satisfied with overt intelligence alone. This is where the diplomatic cover and immunity protecting embassy-based KGB agents (including the *resident*, the chief agent on 16th Street, whose identity is probably known to American counterintelligence), comes in handy. And this is why the FBI tails men like Boris Kondratsev around the clock.

An agent without diplomatic immunity—an illegal network operator—can be arrested, charged with espionage, and tried, if he is caught red-handed. The worst that can happen to Boris Kondratsev if the FBI proves he is involved in illegal activities in violation of his diplomatic status is to be expelled from the United States (declared persona non grata in diplomatic language)—either quietly or with deliberate publicity. When two Soviet employees at the United Nations Secretariat were trapped in 1978 by Naval Intelligence as they sought to buy American naval secrets, they were sentenced to prison terms. Actually, both the State Department and the CIA had opposed their trial, preferring a quiet expulsion to avoid reprisals against American intelligence operatives in the Soviet Union (this is one of the unwritten rules of the intelligence game), but President Carter went along with the Justice Department and the FBI, ordering prosecution.

Operatives like Boris Kondratsev are more than likely to try to establish contacts with Americans, often government workers in the defense area, who, for financial or ideological motivations, may be willing to steal and sell secret materials. Sometimes these Americans volunteer their services by seeking out Soviet diplomats (who may or not be KGB agents) in what they believe is a discreet fashion. Any such "volunteer" approaching a Soviet diplomat is instantly turned over to a KGB "case officer." In other situations, KGB operatives actively recruit potential American agents, blackmail or financial enticement being the tools of recruitment. This is why the FBI keeps such a close eye on Boris Kondratsev and his colleagues—to be aware of all their movements and possible clandestine contacts.

No two situations are alike. A prospect for recruitment may be spotted for the KGB by friendly Americans, usually acting out of ideological convictions. The KGB case officer then patiently builds up a dossier on the candidate to determine his actual or potential value and the risks involved, especially whether there is the danger of entrapment by American counterintelligence. The prospective agent's personal, professional, emotional and political traits are examined, and the decision is then made —by the resident in Washington or by Moscow —whether an actual attempt at recruitment should be made.

Some American counterintelligence experts suspect that illegal networks are also engaged in this type of recruitment, but it is not clear whether these recruits are handled directly by the illegals or passed on to KGB officers at the embassy. It is probably safer for the KGB to use its personnel under diplomatic cover for such work, but in special cases the illegals maintain total control of the operations.

The KGB in the United States also is making extensive use of sophisticated electronic systems for espionage, a new wrinkle. In the mid-1970s, KGB operatives at the embassy in Washington and at the consulates in San Francisco and New York succeeded in monitoring United States government telephone communications, as well as those of private citizens, carried by microwave circuits.

While the administration refuses to say how, precisely, the eavesdropping was discovered, it is assumed that it was done by the National Security Agency, which specializes in electronic espionage among its many other secretive activities. Actually, the NSA had become aware of it as early as 1974, but details were kept secret for several years. (Subsequently, the Russians have complained that their new chancery, on Wisconsin Avenue near Calvert Street NW, is being bugged by the Americans.)

Upon the discovery of the Soviet eavesdropping, the Carter administration was forced to route government phone communications through underground cables. Completed in 1979 at a cost of more than \$10 million, the Carter program also provided for the expansion of the government's Executive Secure Voice Network, which uses special scrambling devices to encode sensitive phone conversations. Top administration officials are so conscious of the danger of Soviet eavesdropping that they are wary to say anything even remotely confidential in phone calls from their limousines. (They remem-

ber, of course, that the Americans have succeeded in picking up conversations among Soviet officials in their limousines in Moscow.)

Because the Soviets are likewise able to monitor the telephone and telex traffic of American corporations in the United States—such traffic often contains items of economic intelligence of interest to the Russians—the Commerce Department set up late in 1977 a national telecommunications and information agency to assist businessmen in protecting the privacy of their communications. The point here is that in its fullest sense, intelligence-gathering is not confined to spying on governments: Every aspect of American life fits into the gigantic puzzle on the United States being assembled by the KGB and other Soviet institutions. Intelligence today is an indivisible pursuit.

But it is counterintelligence that may be the most secret and jealously guarded facet of intelligence work as far as both the United States and the Soviet Union are concerned. The most ambitious KGB undertaking is the never-ending effort to penetrate American intelligence agencies, chiefly the CIA, through the recruitment of "moles," deep-cover agents who may never be spotted. The CIA, naturally, has been trying to penetrate the KGB in the same manner; whether and to what extent it has succeeded is the agency's most closely held secret.

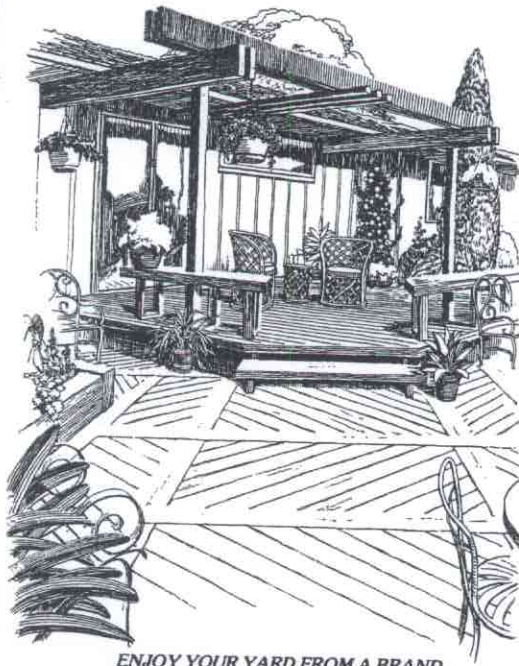
A Soviet mole buried at the Langley headquarters is the CIA's constant nightmare. It may never be known whether such a mole has ever existed—or exists now. While a few former CIA officers have been hinting darkly that a Soviet mole does exist in Langley, they have offered —publicly—nothing but generalities. Still, there is the chilling thought that the formidable British Secret Intelligence Service had been penetrated by the Soviets at the highest levels through British traitors, men with impeccable backgrounds. Some of them were planted at the British Embassy in Washington in the 1940s and '50s, with access to the most sensitive U.S. secrets.

The most important intelligence operations are planned for the long term—not for instant results. It is highly unlikely that a senior CIA official can be recruited today by the KGB. Thus the recruiting target is more likely to be a junior officer, the investment paying off many years later, when he has achieved a high position and access to vital information. If a KGB mole does exist in the

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CIA, he would have been recruited, say, 20 years ago. Today's recruit may start producing—meaningfully—at the turn of the century.

Recruitment of "agents in place" or "agents of influence," as they are called, is not confined to intelligence officers, either by the KGB or the CIA. Some of the most important agents recruited by the CIA have

been Third World students attending American universities a generation or more ago, men and women who today may be cabinet ministers in their countries or other key officials. American counterintelligence assumes that, by the same token, the KGB has been seeking to recruit young people everywhere in the world, including in the United States.

The theory is that these young Americans, even if only a handful, may rise over the years in government, politics, the defense industry or intelligence services, and become not only valuable sources of information but, under optimal circumstances, participants in the American decision-making process.

A former CIA director, who cannot

be identified, said in a recent interview that the KGB's most profitable "target" area in the United States today are "dissent" or minority groups. In his view, the Soviets are increasingly concentrating on these groups as they build their intelligence assets here for the future. The American Communist Party, on the other hand, is seen as almost wholly useless by the KGB: Its members command no influence and have no access to significant information or to decision-making.

The former director, along with other senior American intelligence officers, is persuaded that the KGB is currently engaged in its greatest offensive ever in the United States. It has constructed a many-layered intelligence structure, ranging from a vast and comprehensive program for gathering overt intelligence to the introduction of advanced electronic spying systems and the organization of new and elusive illegal networks. So seriously does the administration take this Soviet undertaking that in the summer of 1978 the National Security Council ordered a top-secret review of Soviet intelligence and American counterintelligence capabilities. A special group was set up to look into KGB abuses of diplomatic immunities.

Given the belief that Soviet intelligence is engaged in a major offensive, the administration is adopting protective measures. While the FBI apparently failed in 1978 in its attempt to exercise, in effect, veto power over the granting of entry visas to the United States to Russians and Eastern Europeans, applications are closely scrutinized. The standing policy is to refuse visas to Soviet diplomats or others who had been expelled on espionage charges from NATO countries. The FBI, for example, succeeded in 1978 in blocking visas for two members of a Soviet cultural delegation that was to negotiate a new agreement with the United States. One of them was Ivan P. Azarov, who had served in Washington between 1951 and 1955, and again between 1961 and 1962, and was expelled from Britain in 1971.

Azarov's visa application is an example of the self-assurance with which the KGB operates. "They've got hell of a nerve to send him back here after he was kicked out of London," an intelligence officer remarked.

But the KGB does have quite a nerve, as all intelligence services do, and there is no reason to expect it to lose it with the new Cold Warlike atmosphere developing in the Soviet-American relationship. If anything, KGB agents, good professionals that they are, will be busier than ever. ■

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